

MINISTRY OF
HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Housing Role of the Greater London Council Within London

Standing Working Party on London Housing
First Report

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1. Introduction

1. We were set up as a result of agreement reached between the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the Greater London Council, and the London Boroughs at a conference in June 1965 of the newly-formed London Boroughs and the G.L.C. under the chairmanship of Mr. Mellish. Our terms of reference were 'to consider ways and means by which Central and Local Government can co-operate in implementing measures to deal with the problems reported on by the Milner Holland Committee, and generally to improve the housing situation in Greater London and to keep under review any arrangements made for these purposes'.

2. This first report contains our conclusions about the housing rôle of the G.L.C. in the London area. The London Boroughs have a housing rôle within their areas similar to that of any other housing authority but the G.L.C. has a special part to play. This is why, although the main theme of this report is co-operation between the authorities, the greater part of it is concerned with defining the rôle of the G.L.C.

We have also discussed ways and means of improving the sources of information about housing in London and we hope to report later on this matter. The problems of 'twilight areas' have been discussed in some detail and these discussions are continuing. Further, we shall be considering the 'consents system' to be introduced under S.21(4) of the London Government Act, the size, type and location of the housing pool the G.L.C. will eventually need to retain, and the desirable pattern of agreements between London Authorities to nominate tenants among themselves. Other matters which have already been discussed include the housing problems of London Transport Workers and people working in other essential services, and the rôle of housing associations in London.

3. The conclusions of the present report were reached against the background of:

- (i) The most crucial housing problems in London — shortages, slums, obsolescence, over-crowding, multi-occupation, etc. — which were high-lighted in the Milner Holland report.

and (ii) Sections 21-23 of the London Government Act which provide the legislative framework within which these housing problems must be tackled.

4. Housing Rôle of the Boroughs

The London Government Act established the 32 London Boroughs and the City of London as the primary housing authorities in their own areas. Basically their task is similar to that of every other housing authority; i.e., to carry out within their areas all the functions laid down in the Housing Acts — assessment of the housing situation, slum clearance, building for general needs, improvement and conversion, management, etc. At present they are undertaking about four-fifths of the four-year programme of new house building, and they will continue to play the major part in meeting London's housing needs. We are all agreed however that London's housing problems will never be overcome by the 33 primary authorities acting in isolation from each other

and from the G.L.C. The acute shortage of land means that in the more hard-pressed Boroughs, mostly but not exclusively in the more central parts of London, new building can usually take place only by the redevelopment of already built-up sites. Many of these Boroughs are finding it desperately difficult to rehouse the families displaced from sites cleared for redevelopment, let alone house anyone from their waiting lists. Clearly such Boroughs urgently need assistance both from other parts of London and from places outside London, to help with their overspill problems.

II. Role of the Greater London Council within London

5. The housing powers of the G.L.C. are set out in Section 21 of the London Government Act; S.21 (4) provides that the G.L.C. should, with certain provisos, have housing powers under the Small Dwellings Acquisition Act 1899, Part V of the Housing Act 1957, Section 9 of the 1958 Act and Section 13 of the 1959 Act. S.21(5) provides that the G.L.C. should in addition have all the other housing powers of a local authority formerly exercised by the L.C.C. until the Minister terminates them. Circular 1/65 set out the Minister's original guidance on the operation of these sections, and indicated when some of the G.L.C.'s transitional powers might be terminated. In our discussions we have considered how the G.L.C. should continue work inherited from the L.C.C., and how it should develop its housing activities within the framework of these legislative provisions. We have felt that the first matter to determine was the scope of the G.L.C.'s programme of land acquisition, clearance operations, and new house-building, and this report concentrates on these topics. What pool of housing the G.L.C. would ultimately need in future, and what rôle they would have in the improvement, conversion, and rehabilitation of old houses and twilight areas would need to be considered later in the light of fuller information.

(a) The L.C.C. Pipeline

6. We agreed that in the interests of continuity, and bearing in mind the need to achieve the four-year programme set by the Government, the G.L.C. should complete L.C.C. projects already in the pipeline. (For details see Appendix 2, Table 1).

We also agreed that the G.L.C. should complete its current joint programme of slum clearance with the Inner London Boroughs. (See Appendix 2, Table 2).

(b) The G.L.C.'s need for accommodation to rehouse people displaced by it in the course of its statutory activities

7. When Section 21(4) of the London Government Act takes effect the G.L.C. will need to seek the consent of a Borough before undertaking development or redevelopment of an area under Part V powers; except that it will not require this consent when it is carrying out work in a comprehensive development area or when it is rehousing people displaced by it in the course of its statutory activities.

It was evident that rehousing people displaced in this way would make substantial demands on the G.L.C.'s resources and we considered how far it would be able to meet these by allocation of its own relets and acceptance of Borough tenancies. We reached the conclusion that although both these resources should be brought into play, individual families have such different needs that the G.L.C.'s relets and nominations are unlikely to be adequate, and that the G.L.C. must retain the power to acquire land and build houses for this purpose.

8. The G.L.C. estimated that in the period 1966-72 it would have to rehouse 71,800 families displaced by it in the exercise of its statutory powers. (A breakdown of these figures is given at Table 3, Appendix 2). The Borough representatives expressed some reservations about these figures, pointing out in particular that quite a large proportion of the displacements would be caused by the G.L.C.'s operation of its housing powers under Part III and Part V of the 1957 Act, which need not necessarily continue on the present scale. Nevertheless we are agreed that the G.L.C. will need to rehouse very large numbers of people displaced in the course of its other activities. Up to 1972 the bulk of new development for this purpose will consist of the projects mentioned above which were in the L.C.C. pipeline. For the period after 1972 the very substantial displacement needs of the G.L.C. which are bound to continue will have to be met from further new development and extended nomination agreements.

(c) G.L.C. Assistance to individual Boroughs within their own areas

9. From our discussions it emerged that some individual Boroughs want and may continue to want G.L.C. assistance in dealing with the housing problems in their own areas. This may occur where there is a specially large housing need, or a large slum clearance problem, or where the character of the work (e.g. clearance of tenements, giving rise to major decanting and overspill problems) is such that it can more effectively be dealt with by the larger Authority. Where the G.L.C. is able and willing to help we can see no special difficulties, and indeed would encourage both sides to go ahead and make appropriate arrangements.

(d) The G.L.C.'s rôle in meeting the housing needs of London considered as a whole

10. In considering the housing needs of London as a whole we bore in mind two fundamental objectives:

- (i) that the overall housing shortage and conditions of overcrowding, multi-occupation, poor environment, etc., must be tackled by every possible means, and
- (ii) that although each part of London has its own housing problems, London must be viewed as a whole and individual Boroughs should consider the extent to which they may be able to offer assistance to those Boroughs which have even greater housing problems.

11. It is clear that the achievement of these objectives will inevitably involve some redistribution of population within London, and a major problem is to decide how such redistribution should be brought about. Agreements between

individual Boroughs may provide part of the answer and we should certainly not wish to discourage these. The pattern of movements is however so complex that some central organization is essential to do much of the job. We agreed that the G.L.C. with its existing organization and extensive resources was the natural agent to achieve this redistribution.

12. As an overspill authority the G.L.C. is able to give some relief to the most congested areas, through the Industrial Selection Scheme or otherwise, for families to move out of London to expanding towns, and with the Government's help to new towns. But there are limits to what can be done in this way. Many people are tied closely to London and even to quite small areas within London. So as to avoid imposing long distance moves on such people the G.L.C. has developed a policy of 'rippling out' families from Inner London, i.e., moving them a short distance outwards when the opportunity occurs. We agreed that the G.L.C. should continue to develop this policy, and we recognized that in order to do so effectively the Council must have at its disposal (though not necessarily all in their ownership) a well-distributed system of accommodation throughout London. The appropriate size and location of this housing pool will need to be considered further in relation to the question of transfer of G.L.C. housing estates to the Boroughs.

13. In addition to the estates it owns itself the G.L.C. must have at its disposal a comprehensive pattern of agreements enabling it,

(a) to nominate substantial number of tenants to the less hard-pressed Boroughs, mostly in Outer London, where except for one or two large estates the G.L.C. has less property of its own;

and (b) to grant in its turn nominations for G.L.C. tenancies to Boroughs with the greatest housing problems.

We noted with satisfaction that the G.L.C. has been able to agree with most of the better placed Boroughs to nominate tenants to a proportion of the Boroughs' new dwellings for the next two years, or longer in some cases, and that at the same time it has been able to make substantial numbers of G.L.C. tenancies available to the Boroughs with greater problems. There is great scope for fruitful co-operation here, and we look forward to a considerable extension of these agreements, which should make a major contribution to the solution of London's housing problems.

Information needed for further Determination of the G.L.C.'s Role

14. Naturally the circumstances of every Borough differ in some respects, and the type of agreement reached will depend on these varying conditions. Nevertheless we believe that both the London Boroughs and the G.L.C. would welcome guidance from the Working Party on how and to what extent these nomination agreements can and should be developed. A first requirement in order to do this is a comprehensive review of the housing supply and demand position of the G.L.C. and of each Borough in their own areas. The G.L.C. has tabled a preliminary statement of its own position (see Table 4, Appendix 2), but is preparing with Borough assistance a fuller appraisal of the supply and demand position in each Borough and in the G.L.C. area as a whole which will cover a period up to 1972 and which should be reviewed annually. A full interchange of information is needed to give the parties a firm basis for reaching agreement on the use of sites.

15. At the same time the Working Party has taken steps to improve the basic statistical information about housing in London. A Sub-Group on statistics has been set up, and with its assistance we shall later be presenting a fuller report on the information available and what additional information needs to be collected.

16. Meanwhile we set out at Appendix 1 what we consider to be the basic framework of information necessary for the present purpose of indicating the long-term housing rôles of the G.L.C. and the London Boroughs and in particular:

- (i) to help determine the size, type, and location of the housing pool the G.L.C. will eventually require, together with the amount of new building and/or the number of nominations the G.L.C. will ultimately need in order to make an effective impact on the problem of redistribution within London.
- (ii) to assist us in suggesting more objective guide-lines than at present exist on what proportion of their total programme the less congested Boroughs might offer the G.L.C. in nominations or to what extent the G.L.C. should build on its own account in these Boroughs.

17. Some of this information is already available, and we are collecting further material. One very large gap has been noted—the lack of any comprehensive information about the physical condition of the housing stock in London, as a basis for deciding what actually needs doing in each Borough in the way of improvements, repair, rehabilitation, replacement, slum clearance, etc. To fill the gap the G.L.C. and the London Boroughs are engaged in the early stages of a sample survey of the condition of 100,000 dwellings. We have given warm support to this survey and hope that the Boroughs will be able to give the G.L.C. the assistance it needs to carry it out.

Sites for Development

18. On the question of sites we feel that the present system of consultations between the G.L.C. and individual Boroughs on sites in which both the G.L.C. and the Borough have an interest has been highly successful so far, and we should hope to see this continue. Again we hope that when the information we have commissioned has been compiled it will provide a more objective basis to assist those who have to decide the detailed arrangements between the G.L.C. and the Boroughs on the use of sites. In this connection it is clear already that the development of the major "windfall" sites and railway land will be of particular importance for meeting the needs of London as a whole, or for broad sectors of London with acute housing problems. It will, therefore, be natural for the G.L.C. to play an important part in the development of these sites.

Conclusion

19. We are convinced that London's housing problems can only be solved if all the resources and all the agencies involved work to maximum capacity. The current four year housing programme of 125,000 local authority dwellings to be built in London in the period 1965-68 is a dramatic increase over previous years, but should be within the capacity of the new London authorities. Such rapid progress will however call not only for building capacity but

also for a co-operative approach to any administrative problems which may arise. The people who are victims of London's housing plight are not so much concerned with the question 'who builds?' but with the answer to the question 'when?'.

In concluding this report we wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution made to our work by the secretary of the Working Party, Mr. F. A. Osborn, both in organizing the business of the Working Party and in the preparation of the report.

Signed on behalf of the Working Party,

H. F. SUMMERS (Chairman).

January 1967

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APPENDIX 1

Framework of Information Needed

In order to assess the housing situation in London, to decide what needs to be done, and to determine who should do it, we need to improve our sources of information. Information about housing in London is needed under two main heads:

- (1) the housing needs and problems of each Borough;
- (2) what is being done to meet those needs by each authority, and the resources of land, labour, money, etc., available for the task.

1. Needs

A simple measure of housing needs is hard to come by, but we are agreed that basic information under the following heads should be available regularly on a Borough basis in order to assess the situation, and more particularly in order to determine how much each Borough and the G.L.C. should be expected to do to meet the housing needs of London as a whole:

- (a) the numerical housing shortage,
- (b) qualitative housing deficiencies, as measured by the indices used by the Milner Holland Committee, i.e., amount of overcrowding, multi-occupation, and lack of amenities;
- (c) losses and expected losses due to slum clearance, demolition of houses for other purposes, such as redevelopment, road-building, school-building, etc., and net loss of housing accommodation (where it is a loss) of houses through conversion;
- (d) the condition of the housing stock — what needs to be demolished as unfit, and what could be improved and to what standard, and what is satisfactory.

2. Supply

On the supply side we need regular information under the following heads on a Borough basis:

- (a) the stock of housing by size and condition, and by tenure — whether owner-occupied, privately rented, or local authority owned, and if local authority whether the Borough or the G.L.C.;
- (b) the current and expected supply of new housing by size and developer;
- (c) the amount of improvement work, and the housing gain (where there is a gain) by conversions of existing property;
- (d) the supply of land.

Evidently the housing problems are not static, and besides assembling information about the present situation under the above heads, we are endeavouring to obtain information from planners and other sources so as to make reasonable estimates of housing needs and supply in the future.

APPENDIX 2

Some Figures Relating to the G.L.C.'s Role in Providing Housing in London

1. **The L.C.C. Pipeline.** This table shows the number of dwellings to be built by the G.L.C. in each Borough on sites already acquired by the L.C.C. or which the L.C.C. resolved to acquire. The first column represents the number of dwellings which will be built in the 1965-68 programme on L.C.C. sites (though a few may come later as infillings of existing estates, or as completions

of schemes to be begun in the 1965-68 programme); it was agreed that the G.L.C. should definitely continue with these. The second column represents the number of dwellings which the G.L.C. intend to develop in the 1969-71 period on sites which the L.C.C. had already acquired or resolved to acquire; it was agreed that the G.L.C. should assume it would continue to develop these unless representations were made to it by individual Boroughs.

<i>Inner London Boroughs</i>			<i>Outer London Boroughs</i>		
	'65-'68	'69-'71		'65-'68	'69-'71
Camden	51	200	Barking	32	—
City of London	—	—	Barnet	25	—
Greenwich	410	360	Bexley	—	—
Hackney	2953	730	Brent	—	—
Hammersmith	611	161	Bromley	48	160
Islington	1534	2000	Croydon	—	—
Kensington & Chelsea	313	144	Ealing	70	—
Lambeth	3026	446	Enfield	—	—
Lewisham	1374	273	Haringey	—	—
Southwark	4957	474	Harrow	—	—
Tower Hamlets	5221	3084	Havering	1750	—
Wandsworth	1064	1477	Hillingdon	15	—
Westminster	726	311	Hounslow	—	—
			Kingston	—	—
Total (Inner London)	<u>22240</u>	<u>9660</u>	Merton	9	—
			Newham	141	—
Total (Outer London)	2271	160	Redbridge	158	—
			Richmond	—	—
GRAND TOTAL	<u>24511</u>	<u>9820</u>	Sutton	23	—
			Waltham Forest	—	—
N.B. These figures do not include development at Woolwich-Erith, Kidbrooke, Hendon, and Croydon Airport.			Total (Outer London)	<u>2271</u>	<u>160</u>

2. The G.L.C.'s share of the approved joint slum clearance programme 1965-70 in Inner London.

<i>Borough</i>	<i>Number of slums already represented or to be represented in 5-year programme</i>	<i>The Borough to deal with</i>	<i>And the G.L.C. to be respon- sible for</i>
Camden	641	407	234
Greenwich	2088	1236	852
Hackney	2223	763	1460
Hammersmith	900	495	405
Islington	2327	842	1485
Kensington & Chelsea	731	580	151
Lambeth	? 2000	? 1000	? 1000
Lewisham	912	388	524
Southwark	3902	1965	1937
Tower Hamlets	8551	2190	6361
Wandsworth	706	190	516
Westminster	981	625	356
	<u>25962</u>	<u>10681</u>	<u>15281</u>

N.B. Lambeth's full programme has not finally been agreed.

3. The number of dwellings the G.L.C. will need in order to rehouse people displaced by their activities in the period 1966-72:

Families displaced under :

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Part III</i>	<i>Part V</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Open Spaces</i>	<i>Roads</i>	<i>Moderniza- tion and rehabilita- tion</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
N.W. London	5250	3100	5350	2200	600	2500	19000
N.E. London	11100	5400	4300	3600	700	3200	28300
S.W. London	4500	3600	2800	2300	800	4000	18000
S.E. London	1700	1250	1000	300	750	1500	6500
TOTALS	<u>22550</u>	<u>13350</u>	<u>13450</u>	<u>8400</u>	<u>2850</u>	<u>11200</u>	<u>71800</u>

4. The G.L.C.'s Supply and Demand Position, 1966-72

Demand (No. of households)

	<i>Displacements</i>	<i>Allocations to Boroughs</i>	<i>Sons & Daughters</i>	<i>Special Quotas</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
N.W. London	19000	7000	100	900	27000
N.E. London	28300	5000	1500	700	35500
S.W. London	18000	5000	300	700	24000
S.E. London	6500	2500	200	800	10000
TOTALS	<u>71800</u>	<u>19500</u>	<u>2100</u>	<u>3100</u>	<u>96500</u>

<i>Supply (No. of dwellings)</i>					
	<i>New Dwellings</i>	<i>Modernization and Rehabili- tation of G.L.C. owned dwellings</i>	<i>Relets</i>	<i>Borough alloca- tions to G.L.C.</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
N.W. London (incl. Hendon)	9000	1600	2900	3000	16500
N.E. London	14500	2200	8800	2000	27500
S.W. London (incl. Croydon Airport)	13000	2700	7300	3000	26000
S.E. London (incl. Kidbrooke and Woolwich)	11400	1000	3600	1000	17000
Outside G.L.C. area (e.g. Farnborough, Lea Valley, Ash Green, infilling at distant estates and relets at distant estates) and general acquisition of dwellings	5000	—	4000	—	9000
TOTALS	<u>52900</u>	<u>7500</u>	<u>26600</u>	<u>9000</u>	<u>96000</u>

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